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Concept of Hajj and Ummah 1998

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Hajj is an avowed surrender to the will of the Creator ensample in pious lives of Hazrat Ibrahim, Hazrat Isma'il and the Last Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The message of Hajj is submission, while its pre-requisites are leaving the kith and kin, hearth and home and undertaking the hazard of long journey. Hajj rituals include changing over to Ihram, performing Tawaf and Sa'ee, staying in Arafat, night sojourn of Muzdalfa, the rendezvous of Mina, animal sacrifice, the Rami Jimar (pelting stones on Satan) and shaving of head.

In addition to these, an all-embracing aspect of Hajj is its comprehensiveness. In fact, Hajj covers all the prescribed forms and rituals of Islamic prayers. Its real spirit lies in profusely reciting Allah's name. In its first reckoning, Hajj encompasses all forms of prayers as the bondsman turns towards Baitullah in the first instance and proceed to perform this pilgrimage. Clad in Ihram with purity of body and soul he goes round and round the Ka'aba, prostrates frequently and recites Allah's name from beginning till the Tawaf-e-Wida (the departing ceremony).

As namaz is defense against evil and indecency, as the Qur'an says, "Prayer fends away indecency and evil," so is the Ihram, which also wards off amorality. The rituals of Hajj save man from evil desires, adultery and impiety. Zakat is the pecuniary invocation restraining man from the lust of worldly wealth on the one hand and serving as means to mitigate economic disparity, eliminate hunger and poverty on the other. For performing Hajj, one has to spend wealth on travel and animal sacrifice besides bearing loss by waiving his earnings for some time and making provisions for his family during his absence. Ihram, the Hajj attire for rich, poor, kings and beggars, presents a unique model of human equality. The sacrificial meat is distributed among the poor and the needy. This way, the spirit of Zakat becomes manifest. The purpose of fasting is to inculcate fear of Allah, control passions, prepare for physical exertion, restrain from sex, and create an atmosphere of apprehension and to keep busy in recitations. All these elements are found in Hajj.

Each one of the prayer modes is included in Hajj in its own peculiar way. Fasting has special bearing on Qur'an. During Hajj, the recitation of Qur'an creates deepest impact when one visits the sites where it descended 14 centuries before.

Hajj is thus the converging point of congregational aspect of all modes of prayers, e.g. offering prayers with jama'at, organized distribution of Zakat through the institution of Baitul Mal and its prescription for Ummah in one particular month. Thus, all the Islamic rituals and their targets have been put together in this one form of worship. It is peculiar in itself and an experience that lasts throughout a Muslim's life.

Another unique aspect of Hajj is its vivid exhibition of oneness of the Ummah and the humanity. During Hajj days, the pilgrims seem to be- long to one family, who has shunned differences of color, breed, country, language, social variance and economic disparity. All bondsmen converge on one center from every corner of the world for Ziarah and Tawaf while spending days and nights following one Imam and

reciting one verse of Talbiha. Here all distinctions of civilization and civic traits are dissolved. Hajj congregation thus becomes a model of devotion to Allah and a model for humanity.

It becomes one's passion to devote one's life to preaching one's 'deen' and upholding its approach. The real task, therefore, during Hajj is constantly remembering Allah. Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi explains this aspect saying: "Khana Ka'aba is the shade of Allah's Arsh in this world and the focal point of His bounties and blessings." This is the source where from emerged the fountain of true worship and satiated the whole world. It is the geographical bondage that binds all the people of this Ummah who live in different countries and territories, speak different languages, put up different dresses, reside in various civilization. However, all of them, despite their natural dissimilarities and innate distinctions, go to one Khana Kaaba and determine one Qibla as their focal point for worship. By recognizing one place as the mother of all habitation, and eliminating all other discriminations of country, nation, civilization and society, race and color, the pilgrims unite in one country into one nationality (dynasty of Ibrahim), society, civilization (Millat-e-Ibrahimi) and language (Arabic). Today people's dream is to get rid of the narrow straits of rationalism and country affiliation and move on to the open theatre of human fraternity. However, initially it was the call of Ibrahimi Millat followed by its renewed calling by Millat-e-Mohammadi that presented it in real terms to the world. People are busy today in devising a lingua franca for the whole world but the decision about the centralism of Khana Kaaba solved this problem long ago for the dynasty of Ibrahim. People are striving to hold a world conference or universal moot to create affinity among the nations of the world but as far as Muslims are concerned this assembly has existed since the last thirteen hundred years in this world, and the standard bearer of Islamic learning, civilization, religion and morality.

Muslims lived under one system of government viz. Khilafat for one hundred and fifty years. During that period, the occasion of Hajj remained a major element of their political and organizational set up. On this occasion, all the important issues of the state (Khilafat) used to be decided. All the important state dignitaries from Spain up to Sindh used to assemble here to discuss with Khalifa all their problems and ways to resolve the same. The subjects of different countries could come to ventilate their grievances, if any, against the governors and other state functionaries before the Khalifa. Justice was administered there and then. Islamic instructions and preaching could reach distant areas of the world within short span of time and it was all due to this annual Hajj congregation.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself performed his only Hajj - called Hajjatul Wida - with this principle in view. The person who resided in Makkah for thirteen years alone was addressing a congregation of one hundred thousand devotees, after 23 years. All those present heartened him and hailed, "We hear and we submit". Later, the Khulafa-e-Rashideen, other Khulafa, Sahaba and renowned Imams assembled here year after year and propagated the dictates of Islam. The result was that in response to new events, new problems people were apprised of their solutions, and fatwas were given about them. This practice prevails even now.

Unfortunately, the narrow-minded people still call it a pleasantry and the 'political angle of Deen'. In fact, Hajj is such a marvel of Islam and a historical feat that it astounds even its opponents. If we consider it from this angle, we find that Allah's Book Qur'an has so far been preserved through its memorization (Hifz), its copying by hand, its nazira teaching and its recitation during the month of Ramadan. In the same way Hajj has converted itself into a historical system imbued with Islam's real spirit of devotion to Allah, His servitude, Muslim Ummah's oneness and brotherhood as a whole. As an

institution, this tradition has been travelling from this center to the entire world and from one generation to the other and it shall continue, Insha'Allah, to be so until eternity.

Maulana Syed Abdul A'ala Maududi has very aptly described this aspect: "It would be pertinent if

I say that the month of Ramadan, is a session of Taqwa (Allah's fear) throughout the world of Islam. Likewise, the period of Hajj is a spell for awakening and life of Islam all over the world. In this way, the wise, the dexterous creator of Shari'ah has made such an immaculate arrangement that Insha'Allah the universal movement of Islam can never be obliterated.

The state of affairs in the world may deteriorate to any extent and the worst times may overtake but this center of Ka'aba has been planted in the body of Islamic world like heart in the body of a human being. So long as heartbeats a man cannot die despite his having become motionless due to ailments. Exactly in the same way, this heart of Islamic world sucks blood every year from the end veins as well and then spreads to every artery. For so long as this movement continues and the process of sucking and releasing is on, it would be unthinkable that the life in this body shall come to an end, may it be emaciated to any extent." (Khutbat, vol. IV, p. 152) These are the blessings of Hajj that despite all the degradations, this Ummah survives with life and warmth. If evil forces are attacking from all sides, the strength of truth is engaged in defense, resistance and progress. All this is inspite of the fact that presently due to various reasons Hajj and other ritual performances are not yielding the desired results.

In addition, the system prescribed by Islam for correction and renewal is paralyzed to the great extent. No doubt, pious personalities are also there in Muslim Ummah and some active groups do exist, which are struggling to reestablish 'deen' with its original spirit but Muslim Ummah largely is the victim of negligence and inattention towards deen.

The influential, the modern educated people and those in power are just negligent lost in selfishness and worldliness and oblivious to the need to establish Deen and revive the Shari'ah. Prayers are generally devoid of their real spirit and reduced to mere rituals. That is the reason why inspite of the presence of Sunnah and Shari'ah, respect for fasting, zakat and hajj, building of mosques and madrassas and profusion of Dawah and Tableegh, missions and congregations, muslims are not getting far: namaz produces no effects; fasts do not create god-fearing individuals; zakat fails to promote economic and social justice; and Hajj is not infusing fresh blood in the body of Muslim. Ummah.

The Ummah as a whole and particularly the wise, the pious, as well as collective religious leadership needs to trace reasons due to which our prayers are not fully bearing their fruit. The foremost is their role and performance in the overall scheme of offering prayers and imparting Islamic teachings without improvements therein. A study of the history of religion and culture tells us that any revolutionary concept retains its real character as long as its real spirit pulsates and it is not reduced to mere rituals. For this very reason Qur'an and Sunnah have assigned great importance to rectification of aim and intent, and "to perform every prayer with fatter and accountability (Ehtisab).

Today the most fundamental problems are the lack of religious knowledge, general ignorance and degradation in education, whereas Islam had triggered the education revolution obliging every Muslim man and woman to get educated. Performance of rituals and prayers, particularly Hajj, without fully understanding their spirit is the malaise that is rendering these practices ineffective. Therefore, what is

needed is to inculcate awareness about deen and Shari'ah, impart Qur'anic teachings, and create full understanding about its role in the whole system of life.

Mere cramming a few Surah and repeating them is not desired. Every prayer should be reckoned with after full understanding and grasping the meaning of each word. Attaining this much learning is the responsibility of every individual and particularly of the influential people in the society. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) advised that each of you is like a herdsman, answerable for his herd.

It means that responsibility lies with parents, teachers, elders in home, councilor of the area, leaders of the society and state functionaries to achieve deliverance of the nation from the state of ignorance. Instructional revolution is the first step towards rectification of the present situation.

This instructional revolution is three-dimensional. First, inculcating among people the essential teachings of deen in their true sense. Second, comprehending these teachings with their real spirit and performing the rituals with full understanding. Third, maintaining good standards so that virtue could be promoted and evil forces could be given a fight not only through education and persuasion but through practical motivation as well.

When worship is reduced to mere formal rituals and practices instead of communication with Allah and His supplications, and become spiritless and lifeless routine, then it can usher no change in life. Today our Namaz, our Fasts and Hajj, all have become ineffective because we have made them a mere formality, a practice and a body without life but we still assume that we have done what was the due.

Comprehensive understanding of deen is the essence of education. Thus what is needed is that every member of the Ummah be acquainted with the basic teachings of deen, its real spirit and desired results by employing all the modern educational techniques. Only then, our prayers can bear fruit. Otherwise it is apprehended that not only 'Ibadat' but every other religious activity will be rendered lifeless and ineffective.